



HAND IN HAND

Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind

**Staunton, Virginia
October, 2009**

Becky Sigrist, Editor

PARENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Students Depart Friday, November 20, 2009

Students Return on Sunday, November 29, 2009



WINTER HOLIDAY

Student Depart Friday, December 18, 2009

Students Return Sunday, January 3, 2010



From the Superintendent, Dr. Nancy Armstrong



Greetings,

This school year started with a renewed spirit and dedication to our theme, "Continuing Together." In 2008, legislation passed through the General Assembly to close the Virginia School for the Deaf, Blind and Multi-Handicapped in Hampton and nineteen students transferred to the Staunton campus in the fall of 2008. Our school theme last year represented this merger "Coming Together-Educating All Minds." So this year, it seemed appropriate to have our theme as "Continuing Together."

The building project at VSDB is in full swing. Over the summer much of the utility work was done on the courtyard. Carter Hall, dormitory for deaf boys, was vacated and prepared for demolition. The maintenance building located off Commerce Road was started. As of today, the maintenance building is complete and has a new name. A contest was held and the maintenance building is now named the Shafer Maintenance Complex to honor a former slave, Dennis Shafer. Uncle Dennis, as he was known on campus, worked and lived on campus from 1839 to 1845 and dedicated his life to the welfare of the students.

The Stuart Building located in the heart of campus is being renovated for the new student center on the first floor and the media center on the second floor. At the first of the year, Mary Murray, Director of Student Life, created a student safety committee. Yesterday, this committee had a guided tour of the vacant Carter Hall and the new student center. The student safety committee is comprised of Michael Moses, Justin Broxton, Xandru Amrhein, Lisa Parker, Hope Adkins and Brian Abel. This committee has been instrumental in directing pedestrian traffic around construction since the beginning of the school year.

The building projects on campus will continue for the next two years. In addition to the building project, there are several maintenance reserve projects that we are doing to enhance buildings and areas not touched by the project. For example, the walkway and steps into Main Hall are currently being torn out and new stone and brick will be constructed in these areas. This will correct safety hazards related to trips, slips and falls. Another maintenance reserve project is currently being used to paint the outside of Byrd Hall and the Lewellyn Gymnasium. The last project will repair or replace roofs on several buildings. We anticipate that in two years the campus will be refreshed from top to bottom.

During the General Assembly legislation in 2009, the VSDB was established as a separate state agency governed by a Board of Visitors. Board members were invited to a meeting on October 29, 2009. Senator Hanger was elected chairman of the new Board. During the meeting, bylaws were adopted and the purpose of the board was discussed. Board of Visitor meeting notices, members and minutes will be posted on the VSDB website at www.vsdbs.virginia.gov these are public meetings and public comment will be entertained at each meeting.

On November 3 and 4, two representatives from the Department of Education were on campus to conduct a review of our Individual Education Program (IEP) and observe classroom instruction. At the exit interview, they praised the Present Level of Performance and transition portions of the IEPs. Also, they commented that students appeared happy and engaged in instructional activities. We will receive a formal document representing their findings from this review, but we are pleased with the results.

In closing, I appreciate the opportunity to work with the students and staff at VSDB. I encourage you to visit your child's classroom and/or dormitory program. If you have concerns please do not hesitate to call me at 540-332-9216.

Sincerely,

Nancy Armstrong, Ed.D.
Superintendent

ADMISSIONS DEPARTMENT

A REMINDER TO PARENTS WHO MOVE TO A DIFFERENT SCHOOL LOCALITY

All students enrolled at VSDB are required to be registered with the local school division where they reside. If at any time a student's family moves to another school locality, it is your responsibility to register your child with that local school division. VSDB works cooperatively with public schools of the city, town or county where the student resides and a completion of a new services agreement would need to be developed with the school division. The school division would also need copies of student records and you may be required to sign a release of information so the local school division could request your child's VSDB records. Failure to register your child with the school division where you move may jeopardize your child's continued placement here at VSDB.

It is very important that you contact VSDB any time you move or change a phone number (including cell and work numbers) as we want to keep parents involved in their child's education.

If you have questions, please call me (540-332-9004) and I would be happy to contact the special education director of the local school division to determine which school, including the school address, where you would register your child.

Jane Nessar
Admissions Coordinator

News from the Transition Specialist

Anna Hoover – email at anna.hoover@vsdb.virginia.gov or 540-414-5248

There is some great resource information for parents attached to this newsletter:

Attachment 1: Transition Resources for Parents

Attachment 2: Parent Resources for Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Work Study Program

Transition to Life After High School and the World of Work: Community-Based Career Education at VSDB

On Wednesday, October 14, 2009 VSDB students and staff went to Wal-Mart and Starbucks for an awards presentation to celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness month. The Shenandoah Valley Disability/Employment Awareness Committee (SVDEAC) selected Wal-Mart as the Training Site of the Year and Starbucks as Employer of the Year. VSDB students and staff from the Deaf and Blind departments nominated Wal-Mart and Starbucks for these awards. Students wrote letters of support based on their work experiences at these businesses. Teachers, teaching assistants, interpreters and educational support staff wrote letters explaining why they felt that these businesses deserved special recognition.

VSDB students and staff recognized Wal-Mart for providing continuous opportunities for students from both the Deaf and Blind departments to come and learn work skills. Wal-Mart also has staff members who are willing to mentor students as they learn new skills. Starbucks

was selected as the first business in the community to hire a student from VSDB. Starbucks staff made an extraordinary effort to make that student feel welcome. Staff at Wal-Mart and Starbucks have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to VSDB students, including learning sign language, allowing Braille adaptations to the environment, and fostering an atmosphere of acceptance.

Article written by Michael Moses, Shannon Franklin, Cortez Briggs, Sharon Starcher and Anna Hoover



News from the Infirmary

Update H1N1 Influenza

Type A/ Presumably H1N1 Flu has been affecting our students and staff on campus over the past few weeks. Individuals with the Type A/H1N1 Flu have complained of fever, headache, sore throat, cold, cough, malaise/generalized weakness, muscle/body aches, and a few complaints of nausea and vomiting.



Soon you will be receiving a letter, and some forms from us in regard to the H1N1 vaccine to be given here at VSDB. **I urge you to promptly read the information and complete the questionnaire enclosed and send it back to us in the return envelope.**

Many of the parents signed the consent for their child to receive the vaccine at the beginning of this school year during registration. For those who did not sign up, you will find a consent form to sign.

Please inform us if your child has already received the H1N1 flu vaccine at home, or if you have decided that you do not wish to have your child vaccinated.

Students and staff who have apparently already had the Type A/H1N1 Flu **should** take the vaccine. Taking the vaccine assures that you will probably gain better protection for future waves of the H1N1 influenza when it returns.

Vaccine administration will be focused on several priority groups, with the first vaccines given to those students and staff who are a top priority. Then as more vaccine is provided to us from our local Public Health Department, additional vaccinations will be offered to healthier individuals. Those priority groups are:

1. Children and adults ages 6 months thru 24 years, with the top priority for children/adults who have additional chronic health conditions such as asthma, CP, seizure disorder, diabetes, etc. because they are at an increased risk for complications from influenza.
2. Pregnant women in any stage of pregnancy.
3. Health care and emergency services workers with direct patient care responsibilities.
4. Those who live with/care for a child less than 6 months of age.
5. Adult age 25-64 with medical conditions that place them at increased risk for complications from influenza.

We wish to thank parents for co-operating to take their ill children home when we have called. Some students have been seen by their physicians at home for treatment; however, we are happy that no student has required hospitalization.

News from the Blind Department



Carol Swindell, Ed.S., Asst. Principal of the Blind Department

Please contact me at any time if you have any concerns or issues about our program or email me at carol.swindell@vsdbs.virginia.gov or call 540-332-9015.

Our high school students listened to a guest speaker, Richard Pimentel, about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and how his involvement helped start the movement.

Our Orientation & Mobility Instructor, Mrs. Merry-Noel Chamberlain issued a parent handbook for skills that parents can work on with students at home. These were sent home with students. If you did not receive one, please call Paula Hoal, secretary in our blind department office 540-332-9014.

A parent sponsored benefit was held on November 1st, at Eli's Fun Center with the VSDB rock band the "Barbarians" and at least nine other local bands. The benefit raised \$283.00 for dorm activities. Teachers, staff, and students attended to support the event from 3 to 10pm (See pictures under Residential Program).

Blind Residential Activities

Fishing trip to WWRC lake (Bass 1 Boys)



Michael and Rory looking for "the one that got away".

This is our nature walk. The students and staff enjoyed a picnic, fishing and a hike around the lake.

In the picture from left to right: Michael Girma, Rory Swientek, Tammy Staton, Jacob Looney, Perry Grimm and Lenny Whitlow.



News from the Preschool Department



Keturah Clements, Teacher

The month of September was quite an exciting one for preschool. During this month, we explored our **All About Me** theme. Within this theme, we studied various concepts related to the student's "Sense of Self." We identified and labeled basic body parts, explored the five senses and

identified the parts of the body that correspond with those senses, talked about basic hygiene and practiced how to keep our bodies healthy and germ free. We even took time to focus a little on our families, both our classroom family and our immediate families. Some of the highlights from this theme included creating body tracings and stuffing them to make them look authentic, making face duplicates that matched our skin tones, having a day designated for each of the five senses and exploring each sense through innovative activities, performing a "germ busting" experiment, and bringing in pictures of family members to create a preschool family tree.



Also during the month of September, the students were involved in a variety of literacy related activities that incorporated each of the concepts we've studied. Such activities included reading numerous books that coincided with the theme, making a book about our classroom family that incorporated pictures of each member of the class, drawing pictures of our immediate families and "labeling" the members, introducing our "letters of the week," tracing and identifying the beginning sounds of those letters, etc. During our math time throughout September, we collected data on hair color of various students and staff and graphed our results, counted members in our immediate families and in our classroom family, talked about shapes, positions of objects and much more! The students appeared to thoroughly enjoy themselves throughout this theme. It was an exciting and enlightening experience for them all!



The month of October has been just as great for preschool as we introduced and welcomed the **Fall** season! We began this theme by talking briefly about the signs that we can look for to help us recognize this wonderful season. Noticing the change in the weather, the change in the color of the leaves on the trees, the falling of leaves from the trees and the harvesting of pumpkins and apples are all signs that tell us "Fall is here!" Each week during the month of October, we focused on a different fall concept. We explored apples, pumpkins, fall colors, and leaves. Some of the highlights from this theme included visiting the Apple Orchard in Charlottesville, the Pumpkin Patch in Harrisonburg, and searching for and collecting fall leaves from the grounds of VSDB. These adventures were excellent hands on experiences for the students.



Some of the literacy activities integrated within this theme included reading a variety of Fall books and making predictions about what might happen in the stories, making class books about our adventures to the Apple Orchard and Pumpkin Patch, drawing pictures about what we liked best on our field trips, introducing our "letters of the week," tracing and identifying the beginning sounds of those letters, name identification/writing and much more! During our math time throughout this month, the class placed apples and pumpkins around the room using the terms in, out, beside, above, under, top, and bottom, collected leaves of various colors and graphed how many of each color was collected, counted apples retrieved from our trip to the Apple Orchard, and much more! Our Fall theme has been quite sensational and we are looking forward to the themes to come.



News from the Deaf Department



Jack Johnson, Principal of the Deaf Department

Please contact me at any time if you have any concerns or issues about the Deaf program or email me at jack.johnson@vsdbs.virginia.gov or call 540-332-9051.

With the first quarter behind us, our students in the Deaf Department were engaged in various activities and opportunities that were fun and educational. It is very exciting to experience firsthand students' enthusiasm for learning and desire to try different things. Our teachers and staff work hard to answer the common question our students ask, "Why do we need to learn this?"

One way to answer this question is to make learning relevant through field trips. Field trips are excellent to experience life beyond the school walls that reinforces learning. Our younger students visited the pumpkin patch farm and the apple orchards to experience farming and understand where stores get their food. More than half of our high school students traveled to Washington, DC to visit the Natural Museum of Health and Medicine, the Museum of American History, and the Solar Decathlon showcase on the mall. In early November the upper elementary and middle school students will visit Jamestown, Virginia to reinforce their studies of the history of our beloved state.

In addition to field trips, students engage in hands-on activities in the classrooms that really help them appreciate the complexity of how things work. Eighth grade students had the opportunity to prepare and manage a mock election for the Governor of Virginia. The high school students prepared issues of each candidate and presented them to the voters. All students had to register and receive their voting cards weeks before the campus election. On the day of the mock election, students had to present their voting card before casting their votes. The majority of VSDB students voted for Creighton Deeds as the next Governor of Virginia.

Preparing our students for the future is important to us, which is why we look for opportunities to have our students experience the real-life work environment. Some of our high school students participate in programs that develop good work ethics. Our Community-Based Career Education program has students working in local businesses such as Carded Graphics, Inc., Maggie Beads, Wal-Mart and the SPCA. Some of our students gain work experience on campus such as working as a library assistant, teacher assistant, or office assistant. Students in the Food Service class experience running a small business on campus, called the "Lunch-n-Bag". This program shops, prepares, takes orders and delivers lunch to VSDB staff on Wednesdays. These experiences are necessary to help them see the world beyond our campus.

There are numerous other activities and opportunities that our students experience that are not noted in this article. We are very proud of the things we can offer to our students that really reinforce their understanding of the world beyond our walls. Our teachers and staff are credited for emphasizing the importance of education.

I am unique!

Chelsea Rush



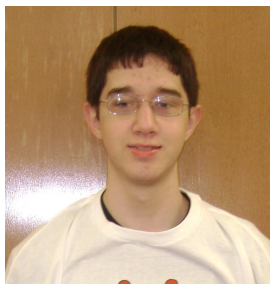
- I am good at sports (volleyball).
- I like to dress like boys.
- I am honest, nice, silly and funny.
- I like to draw pictures of flowers and animals.
- My face looks like my dad.
- I am good working with animals.
- I received a certificate for being nice to my teachers in middle school.

Earl Edwards



- My arms look my Dad's.
- I am a good basketball player.
- I like to exercise. I am strong and handsome!
- I am cool.
- I like to share
- I feel I enjoy high school!!
- Last year I received a trophy for basketball.

Nick Shafer



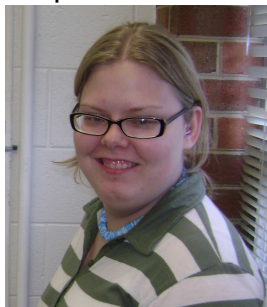
- I am good at art.
- I am happy.
- I like to give hugs.
- I like to act wild and crazy.
- My body is healthy.

Natalia Sosa



- I think my brown eyes, my hair and my face are pretty.
- I am happy.
- I smile a lot and I'm friendly.
- I enjoy being with my family.
- Two years ago I celebrated my Qunice {my 15th birthday}

Hope Adkins

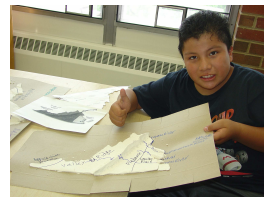


- I like my pretty blue eyes.
- I don't like to be dirty. eww?
- I have a friendly personality.
- I like helping people.
- I like to make new friends.
- I love working on the computer and playing ps2.
- I love art.

Virginia Maps

By Mario Moore

We made a map of Virginia. We cut out the shape of VA on paper. We traced shape of VA on cardboard. We rolled out clay on the shape of VA. Then we made the shape of VA. We made the Blue Ridge Mountains. Then we left the maps to dry. We drew and labeled oceans, rivers and regions of Virginia. We brought the VA maps to the library. We displayed the maps on a high shelf so people can see our maps.



By Curtis Martin

I made a shape of map of Virginia. I cut out a paper shape of VA. I traced the shape of VA on cardboard. I rolled the clay. I used a knife to cut the clay. I make mountains. I let dry for 4 days. I write about rivers, bay and ocean. I draw and label Oceans, Rivers and regions of Virginia. I take the map to the library. People can look at maps.



By Napoleon Langston

I make a Virginia of map. And I cut out the shape of VA on paper. VA is on cardboard then set up. Write on VA clay and cut on VA. Then VA is become dry then we put in library for people look our make on VA map. We have word on VA map in clay. VA's name, Rappohock River, Youk River, Tame River. I forgot some words. We have fun make VA map is enjoy time with us. We draw and label ocean, river and region of VA and we put display in library.



Teachers Corner:

A Resourceful Teacher



It is the belief of the writer that VSDB needs to brag on its teachers more often. Roberta "Bobbie" Dietz is the epitome of a resourceful teacher. When students in her class lack the motor skills to take hot pans out of the oven, or off the stove, what does Bobbie do? She makes them really long oven mitts. "So what?" you may ask. But what Bobbie is doing is teaching her students to be independent. She is fostering in them a sense of self, and making them aware of safety. Bobbie Dietz is doing exactly what teachers worth their salt are doing. Not for these teachers is the "for me, for me" approach to teaching and learning.

Extraordinary contributors all!

Rachel Bavister





Library Line ~

"Libraries Maximize Curriculum"



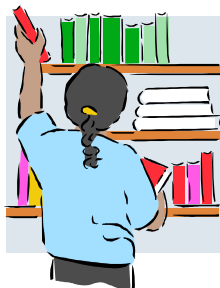
the difference
i can make.

BoxTops – It's Amazing what 10 can do!!!

VSDB's libraries are once again collecting BoxTops for Education. I know many of you are already clipping and saving those boxtops and I greatly appreciate it!! Last year the library received \$568 from boxtops - which was a GREAT supplement to the library budget!!! For those who are clipping - keep up the good effort!

I would encourage everyone to check the products you buy at the grocery store and at Staples. Clip off BoxTop coupons, drop them in a ziplock bag and when it's full, send them to school. Your child's teacher will get them to me. I send in BoxTops twice a year and receive checks for the library from General Mills in December and April.

Box Tops offers 3 easy ways to earn cash for our library through everyday activities such as buying groceries, shopping online and purchasing books.



Library Work Study

This semester Healy Library (in the Deaf Dept.) is very fortunate to have a work study student to assist with a multitude of tasks in the library. This spring both campus libraries are hoping to be moving into a new, bright, cheery, modern space and our work study student, Sarah Komlo is helping us get the books ready to move!! She has been processing all our new books (about 120!) and preparing the 1200 or so books moved here from Hampton to be fully accessed into our collection. Sarah will soon be helping us label and categorize books

into genres to prepare them to be packed up and moved this spring. Sarah also has responsibility for all the BoxTops for Education we collect. She trims them, sorts them by date, and bags them in groups of 50 for me to mail off to General Mills. Sarah is indeed a busy helper and we are very grateful to have her help in the library!!

Shannon Franklin also works in the library from time to time as her schedule permits. She has done a wonderful job and is also helping prepare our library books for the big move into the new library.



Sarah working with BoxTops.



Shannon adding spine IDs to picture books.

**TEEN READ WEEK 2009**

VSDB's libraries are sponsoring Teen Read Week contests and celebrations in both libraries this October.

**Read to the MAX**

In the Blind Dept. we held our 4th annual Teen Read Week blast. This year's theme was "Read to the MAX" and is based on the Maximum Ride book series for teens by James Patterson. The series includes four books, which our library has in both audio format and large print and they have been ENORMOUSLY popular among our students!!! The newest book in the series is due to be published in March. It is called FANG and is based on one of the

characters from the series who is blind. There is also a Maximum Ride movie due out this spring as well!! The library has pre-ordered both the audiobook and large print book, so they should arrive in March when the new book is released!! So, guess what the prizes for the reading contest part of our celebration were? Yep, a choice of 1) FANG audiobook 2) FANG large print book 3) a \$10 movie gift card to be used at Regal Cinemas and 4) a \$10 Wal-Mart gift card. On October 22 we had our Read to the MAX Blast. We had lots of students participate in our Bird Call contest which boiled down to a Bird Call showdown between Tyler McDonald and Farris Hallaj with Farris edging out Tyler! Congratulations, Farris! Then students participated in a Hangman style game all about books that have been made into movies. Congratulations to movie buff Brittany Savage for knowing the most answers. During refreshments, we drew four names to receive our grand prizes. Students were given an entry into the drawing for every 50 pages they read. The two students reading the most pages were: Brittany – 761 pages and Blind Student – 600 pages. We had nine students enter the contest. Most of them had multiple entries.

Our winners were:

Brittany – received a voucher for the audiobook 'Fang'

Blind Student – received a voucher for the large print version of 'Fang'

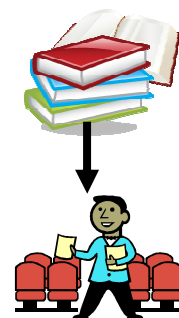
Britni Witter – won a \$10 movie gift card

Stephanie Ferrigno – won a \$10 Wal-Mart gift card

We all had a wonderful time and students are already asking about next fall's Teen Read Week celebration!!!

Books into Movies

In the Deaf Dept. we sponsored a unique Teen Read Week contest. Throughout recent years, many books for teens have been made into movies and this year's "Books into Movies" contest challenged our middle and high school students to see how many they could recognize and name. The contest entry form was on a specially designed web link that our students could access from our campus. It featured 12 movie photos and asked the student to type in the name of the matching book. Once filled in, the answers were sent directly to an email account for me to access. Four winners got grand prizes of \$10 movie gift cards redeemable at any Regal Cinema. Students who could match up at least 10 or the 12 movies with their proper book titles were eligible to win. Participation was very good. We had 18 students enter the contest and nine were eligible for the drawing.



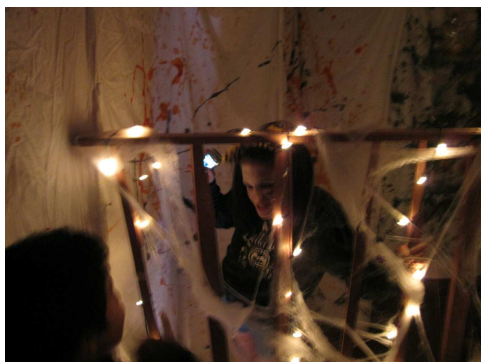
Our winners were:

LaQuinta Brown – the only student who scored 100%!!

Hannah Mills, Breanna Garcia, Kahji Dabney

I think the students really like the electronic, internet format!!! We might look to do a web contest again next year for Teen Read Week!

Residential Program



In an on-going effort to raise money for senior activities, the Class of 2012 held a Haunted House fundraiser on October 27th and 28th. The sophomores, with the help of their class sponsors, constructed a Haunted House in the basement of Battle Hall. The Haunted House, which was filled with witches, ghosts and goblins spooked all those who dared to enter. They are proud to announce that they

raised approximately \$97.00 for their efforts.

Ciara Willard

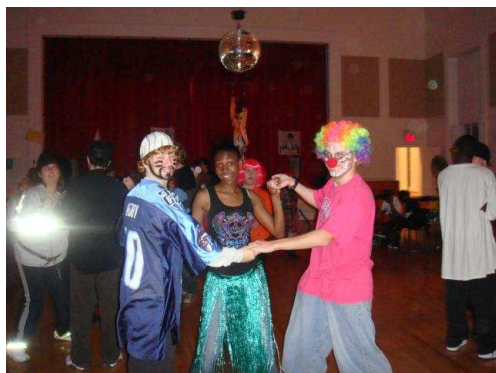


Xandru Amrhein
Cheryl Siron
Adrian Crosby
Wayne Castle

Ghoul



Halloween Party



Cara Eason
Khai Llewellyn
Xandru Amrhein



Jacob Looney

ELI's Fun Center

Tyler McDonald
Ravern Turner



DeSam Benn

The Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind-Staunton does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Nancy Armstrong, Superintendent; P. O. Box 2069; Staunton, VA 24402-2069; (540) 332-9000. For further information on Federal non-discrimination regulations, contact the Office for Civil Rights at OCR.DC@ed.gov or call 1(800) 421-3481.

You may also view [Executive Order 1 \(2006\)](#), which specifically prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, age, political affiliation, or against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities. The policy permits appropriate employment preferences for veterans and specifically prohibits discrimination against veterans. You may obtain additional information at the [Commonwealth of Virginia's official Web site](#) concerning this equal opportunity policy.

This publication is available in Braille upon request.